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FOREIGN AND INSULAR.

AUSTRALIA.

SYDNEY—Examination of Rats for Plague Infection.

The following information is taken from bulletins issued by the department of health of New South Wales:

During the month of October, 1910, there were destroyed 6,793 rats, of which number 2,188 were examined for plague infection. No plague-infected rats were found.

The last case of human plague at Sydney was reported May 29, 1909. The last plague-infected rat was found April 25, 1910.

CEYLON.

COLOMBO—Quarantine and Disinfection System.

Consul Magelssen reports, November 12:

The system of quarantine and disinfection in operation at the port of Colombo is thorough, and the fact that although Ceylon is situated in the center of the plague area of the East not one case has occurred since the system was introduced some years ago speaks well for its efficiency. The department is under the Government and is directly controlled by the plague committee, the executive officer being the port surgeon.

When actual cases of disease are found on board a vessel, the cost of isolation of passengers must be guaranteed by the companies' agents, but disinfection, both personal and of effects, is performed without charge of any sort.

In the event of an actual case of serious infectious disease other than plague on board a vessel, the patient is at once landed, a report made to the chairman of the plague committee by the port surgeon, and subsequent action taken in accordance with the orders of that body. No case of plague, however, is allowed to be landed, and any vessel having on board a person infected with this disease is sent on to Galle or Trincomalee, where special arrangements exist for the isolation of such patients.

In the case of vessels without sickness on board but coming from infected ports and arriving at Colombo before the expiration of the the quarantine period, a very thorough system of disinfection is practiced. The quarantine period which must elapse between a vessel's clearing from an infected port and being considered officially clean by the authorities at Colombo varies with different diseases; in the case of cholera it is 5 days, while with plague and smallpox it is 10 and 18 days, respectively.

In the event of such a vessel coming into Colombo before the expiration of the quarantine period, it is first inspected by the port surgeon, and after he has passed the vessel as free from actual disease, the first and second class passengers are at liberty to land at once,

their personal effects being sent for disinfection. Third class and deck passengers are not permitted to land in Colombo from such vessel unless guaranteed by some responsible person in the town or unless they have themselves deposited with the chairman of the plague committee a security for their compliance with the regulations. If not so guaranteed or if no deposit is made they are either detained on the vessel or are sent to the observation camp at Ragama (about 10 miles from Colombo), the expenses of isolation being guaranteed to the Government by the ship's agents. In the event of their being permitted to land, personal disinfection by means of baths is insisted upon, and they are subsequently required to report daily to the port surgeon until the quarantine period has expired. Coal and cargo coolies working on board clean vessels are subject to personal disinfection before being permitted ashore.

Although personal disinfection is confined to third-class passengers and natives, disinfection of personal effects is insisted upon in all cases irrespective of class. The disinfection is accomplished by means of superheated steam; metal labels are attached to each bundle, and a corresponding receipt is given to the owner who can remove his belongings from the port surgeon's office 6 hours after they have been taken from the vessel.

The disinfecting station, which is situated at the foot of the break-water, is a large one-story building constructed of concrete, and consists of a disinfecting room, dressing and bath rooms for third-class passengers, others for first and second class passengers—who under exceptional circumstances must occasionally undergo personal disinfection—and a large open court in which are situated long metal troughs raised on trestles which are used for the personal disinfection of coolies. This court is surrounded by a veranda under which the coolies can dress and undress and sit until the disinfection of their personal attire is completed.

The actual disinfecting plant consists of a steam sterilizer working under a pressure of about 4 atmospheres. The material is placed in a wire trough or cradle, which fits inside the body of the sterilizer. The process takes from 20 to 30 minutes, and the disinfected linen is removed by a second door opening not into the disinfecting room but into a small antechamber adjoining.

No very complete statistics are available, but the figures which can be obtained give a fair indication of the activity of this department.

For the year 1909 the figures are as follows:

Number of natives and deck passengers submitted to personal disinfection: Cargo coolies, 37,867; coal coolies, 24,752; tally clerks, 5,969; deck passengers, 11,938; total, 80,526.

The personal clothing of all is disinfected. The quantity of ship's linen and clothing belonging to passengers not landing at Colombo amounted to approximately 15,960 bundles. There are no figures published relating to the linen of passengers landing at Colombo.

There is a fumigating apparatus upon one of the harbor tugs, which is used, though not very frequently, for the complete disinfection of ships in dock.

Finally, all coal and cargo lighters, which are under the supervision of an inspector, are periodically disinfected and their bilges thoroughly cleansed.